

José M. Rosado, Brigadier General (Retired)
U. S. Army Reserve

Naturalization Ceremony
14 September, 2006

Honorable Judges of the Federal Court, District of Puerto Rico, Distinguished Representatives of Federal and State Governments, Distinguished Guests, and especially to you and the families of those who have today become full fledged citizens of the United States of America, my most sincere expression of gratitude for inviting me to be the guest speaker at this activity.

Being here today, has given me the opportunity to stop and ponder at what American citizenship means to me. Although my parents taught me to be proud of my Puerto Rican roots, they also taught me to love America and to value the benefits of freedom and liberty that by law, accompany the privilege of being an American. That is the central core of our system of Government. It unites us people of different origins, thoughts and feelings under one Flag. Thus here and now, I also celebrate with you the gift of being an American Citizen.

For you, who pledged allegiance to the United States today, as you raised your right hand and declared, on oath “that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic, that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by law...” my heartfelt congratulations to you on your becoming the newest citizens of our great Nation.

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“The bosom of America is open to receive not only the Opulent & respectable Stranger, but the oppressed & persecuted of all Nations and Religions: whom we shall welcome to participate of all our rights and privileges.” George Washington once stated as he addressed Irish immigrants on December 2, 1783. All of us, who are in this room today, sharing with you in this ceremony, echo that same sentiment.

Like millions before you, who have come to the United States from all over the world, you have assumed this obligation freely, of your own determination, driven by personal circumstances that vary with each one of you.

As we look around us, we see a mix of cultures, races, religions and languages. This is the essence of America, our diversity. We the people of America are brought together not by religion, race, or origin, but by a shared set of beliefs about freedom. President George Bush, Senior, in his State of the Union Address, January 31, 1990 stated, “Our nation is the enduring dream of every immigrant who ever set foot on these shores, and the millions still struggling to be free. This Nation, this idea called America, was and will always be a new world. Our new world.”

You are now participants of this idea we call America, where a person’s position is determined not by birth, rank, or title, but by his talent, ability and enterprise. Where we are given the opportunity to flourish and prosper based on our efforts. Where we believe as did our founding fathers, “that all men are created equal, that they are endowed

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by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”

You now, by law, have become heirs to the individual freedoms and obligations set forth in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. Sacred documents which govern our lives, guaranteeing us a Government of the People and for the People.

However, I must warn you that Freedom does not come free. Since the very birth of our Country, the ideals set forth in the Constitution have been challenged both by exterior forces as well as forces from within. Millions of men and women have undergone great sacrifices, many shedding their blood, others giving their lives, to defend our democratic principles and the freedoms we enjoy today. The experiment we call America has gone through great turmoil and has survived not only because it is just and it is good, but also because of the determination of its citizens.

America is once more being challenge by extremist who are intent on destroying us and what we stand for. The events of September 11th, 2001, whose 5th anniversary we commemorated last Monday still remain fresh on our minds. However, far from separating us or weakening our will, it has served to bring us closer and make us stronger as we stand together as a Nation.

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As we speak today, thousands of brave men and women, all volunteers, members of the United States Armed Forces are once more risking their lives so that America can continue to be free. I have been honored to be associated with these men and women, from all walks of life, who selflessly sacrifice much, not for monetary gain, but because of their Patriotism and love for their country. On more than on one occasion I have had the Solemn but most honorable duty to present a mother, a father, and or a young widow, the Flag of our nation as a symbol of gratitude for the sacrifice their love one made on behalf of all of us who call ourselves Americans. Yes, Freedom is not Free. As you can see it requires commitment, sacrifice, selflessness and love of Country.

These men and women, like you just did today; one day swore to uphold and defend the constitution of the United States against all enemies foreign and domestic and to hold true faith and allegiance to the same as they took their oath of office. And they made good on their words.

Although the Constitution has served America and its people well for the last 220 years, it will only stand strong and serve as the foundation of freedom, if we as Americans, continue to be dedicated to the basic principles on which is founded. Thus as you begin a new chapter of your life as full-fledged American citizens, I encourage you to commit yourselves to living the words contained in the Preamble of our Constitution;

“We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote

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the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

May you live the American dream, may you enjoy all the benefits and freedoms those of us who were blessed to be born in America enjoy. But may you never forget your solemn obligation to work together with your fellow citizens to continue to make America the Beacon of Freedom and liberty it is today.

May the Almighty bless all of us here today, may He allow us to continue to enjoy the freedoms we enjoy. God bless America.

Thank you.